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## FRANCESCO GRISELINI AND HIS RELATION TO GOLDONI AND MOLIERE

The name of Francesco Grisellini will be sought for in vain in most histories of literature and encyclopedias. If he is mentioned at all, it is in connection with his biography of Fra Paolo Sarpi, which appeared in several editions of the *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino* from 1760 on, and attracted so much attention that it was put on the Index;<sup>1</sup> this is, with very few exceptions, the only work by Grisellini that can be found in American libraries. Yet in his day he was a writer of some prominence. He was born in Venice in 1717 and died in Milan in 1783. From 1765 to 1776 he edited in Venice the *Giornale d'Italia*, contributing to it many articles on science and agriculture. In 1768 he began the publication of a *Dizionario delle arti e de' mestieri*, of which he compiled five volumes.<sup>2</sup> He was a member of numerous academies, including those of London, Berne, Gorizia, Florence, and Bologna. His brief excursion into the field of the drama is the occasion of the present paper. While undoubtedly a mediocre writer, he does not quite deserve the oblivion into which he has fallen; some scholar having access to the archives of Northern Italy might well make a thorough study of his career. In 1890 an essay of 35 pages, which in spite of repeated efforts I have not been able to procure, was published about him by Domenico Maddalena, at Schio; and S. Rumor published in 1907 a brief sketch of his life, with a bibliography of his writings.<sup>3</sup>

In 1752 Grisellini published a critical essay on Italian comedy;<sup>4</sup> in 1755 a tragi-comedy entitled *Socrate filosofo sapientissimo*, with

<sup>1</sup> See G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica* (Venezia, 1840-61), XCII, 467-72; Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Firenze, 1805-10), VII, 502-7.

<sup>2</sup> This work was continued by others, and completed, with Vol. XVIII, in 1778. There is a copy in the Yale Library.

<sup>3</sup> Sebastiano Rumor, *Gli Scrittori vicentini dei secoli decimottavo e decimonono*, II, 85-92, in "Miscellanea di Storia Veneta, R. Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria," serie seconda, tom. XI, parte II. The bibliography is not absolutely complete; the British Museum Catalogue contains several additional titles. See also E. A. Cicogna, *Saggio di bibliografia Veneziana* (Venezia, 1847), Nos. 1497, 3230, 3759-64, 3854, 4441-44; G. A. Moschini, *Della Letteratura Veneziana del secolo XVIII* (Venezia, 1806), III, 207; IV, 121.

<sup>4</sup> *Della commedia italiana e delle sue regole ed attinenze considerate in riflesso al secolo nostro*. . . See S. Rumor, No. 3.

an essay on Aristophanes' *Clouds*;<sup>1</sup> and in 1756, *La Schiava nel serraglio dell' Agà de' Giannizzeri, commedia turca*.<sup>2</sup> These works are completely forgotten; but another play, *I Liberi Muratori*, is frequently mentioned in connection with Goldoni's *Le Donne Curiose*. It was printed at Roveredo in 1754.<sup>3</sup> The title-page gives the names of the author and of Goldoni, to whom the comedy is dedicated, in anagram; it also gives the place of printing as Libertapoli, the name of the city which the Masons proposed to build in the Libyan Desert.<sup>4</sup> This title-page has been quoted inaccurately so many times that it is worth while to present it here in a photographic reproduction, together with the engraving which faces it (representing the lodge). See pp. 20-21. It will be observed that the anagram "Ferling' Isac Crens" turns into "Francesc' Griselin." The *o* of Francesco is supplied in the form given in the dedication on p. 3:

Al celebre, magnifico, ed illustre signore Aldinoro Clog primo introduttore del buon gusto nel teatro comico, diletto delle muse, e d' Arcadia filologo, e giurisperito chiarissimo, onore e decoro della letteraria repubblica, questa commedia composta l' anno MDCCLII. Isac Ferlingo Crens in segno di venerazione e rispetto dedica, e consagra.

The name of the author is usually given as Grisellini, the form indicated by the anagram, but sometimes as Grisellini or Grissellini. Cantù<sup>5</sup> gave the anagram as "Fersing Isac Crens," asserting that it corresponded to "Francesco Grisellini," which it does not; and he furthermore misread the place of printing as "Libertinapoli." These errors are repeated by G. Mazzoni,<sup>6</sup> while S. Rumor<sup>7</sup> has "Fersing," "Grissellini," and "Libertanopoli."

Why Grisellini disguised his name in this way is not evident, unless he deemed it safer not to be known as a defender of Free-

<sup>1</sup> Rumor, No. 5; British Museum Catalogue.

<sup>2</sup> Rumor, No. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Rumor, No. 4. There seems to have been another edition: G. B. Pellizzaro, "Ancora sulle 'Donne Curiose' di C. Goldoni," in *Rivista teatrale italiana*, XVIII (1914), 193-212, 280-91, states (p. 193) that a copy in the Marciana is dated falsely 1785; but P. L. Jacob, in the Catalogue of the *Bibliothèque dramatique de M. de Soleinne* (Paris, 1843-45), IV, 95, mentions the edition of 1785 as having 87 pages, while the 1754 edition has 110.

<sup>4</sup> See Act IV, sc. viii, p. 82: "Diconsi Muratori, perchè hanno formato il gran progetto di edificare negli aridi deserti della Libia una Città vastissima, la quale di Libertapoli dovrà portare il nome."

<sup>5</sup> Cesare Cantù, *Gli Eretici d' Italia* (Torino, 1866), III, 417.

<sup>6</sup> Guido Mazzoni, *Memorie di Carlo Goldoni riprodotte integralmente dalla edizione originale francese* (Firenze, 1907), I, 467.

<sup>7</sup> Rumor, No. 4. H. C. Chatfield-Taylor, *Goldoni* (New York, 1913), p. 611, gives the date as 1652.

masonry. His purpose in claiming that his play was written in 1752, was apparently to establish its priority over Goldoni's *Le Donne Curiose*, which was written, performed, and printed in 1753.<sup>1</sup> Goldoni does not refer directly to Freemasonry, either in the play itself or in its preface; years later, however, he stated in his *Mémoires* that his intention was, as the spectators at once recognized, to represent a Masonic lodge.<sup>2</sup> In this connection there has been some discussion as to whether he himself was a Mason, whether he undertook to defend the order for the sake of some friends (Casanova and others) who were members of it, or, finally, whether he simply took the subject, in combination with satire on feminine curiosity, as suitable material for a comedy. There is no direct evidence to guide us.<sup>3</sup> Grisellini claims on his title-page to be "fratello operajo della loggia di Danzica"; but he does not indicate in his dedication, as he surely would have done if it had been the case, that Goldoni also was a Mason. *Le Donne Curiose* and the *Mémoires* fail to give any definite ground for making the assumption. Freemasonry, in spite of being condemned by two popes,<sup>4</sup> was established in various parts of Italy in the middle of the eighteenth century. Goldoni seems to have given a friendly satire of the institution and of popular curiosity concerning it, rather than a defense,<sup>5</sup> and in fact it does not seem to have been taken very seriously.<sup>6</sup> Grisellini's comedy is far more definitely a defense of Masonry, at least in showing that it was

<sup>1</sup> See E. Masi, *Scelta di Commedie di C. Goldoni* (Firenze, 1897), I, 455-61; Chatfield-Taylor, *Goldoni*, p. 611.

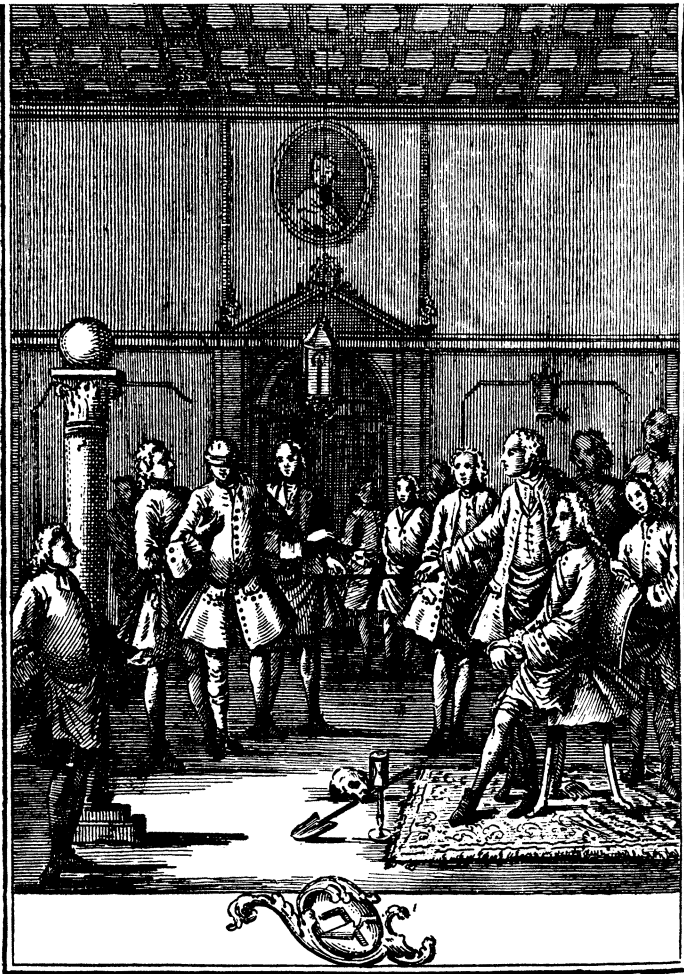
<sup>2</sup> *Memorie di C. Goldoni*, ed. Mazzoni, I, 381-82: "Pièce qui, sous un titre bien caché, bien déguisé, ne représentoit qu'une loge de Francs-Maçons. . . Les Etrangers en reconnurent le fond sur-le-champ, et les Vénitiens disoient que si Goldoni avoit deviné le secret des Francs-Maçons, on auroit tort en Italie d'en défendre les assemblées."

<sup>3</sup> E. Maddalena, "Nota storica" in *Opere complete di C. Goldoni edite dal Municipio di Venezia*, IX (1910), 369-71, inclines to the opinion that Goldoni was a Mason; so also Masi, *op. cit.*, p. 460; Falchi, *Intendimenti sociali di C. Goldoni* (Roma, 1907), p. 122; A. Neri, "Carlo Goldoni e i liberi muratori," *Rivista Europea*, XXVI (1881), 790-98 (reprinted in his *Aneddoti goldoniani* [Ancona, 1883]). For the history of Freemasonry in Italy and the persecutions of its members, see F. Sbigoli, *Tommaso Crudeli e i primi Framassoni in Firenze* (Milano, 1884) (reviewed by Saltini in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, quarta serie, XVII, 111-23).

<sup>4</sup> Clement XII (1738) and Benedict XIV (1751). See Cantù, *op. cit.*, p. 398; Pellizzaro, *op. cit.*, p. 201; Neri, *loc. cit.*; Sbigoli, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Pellizzaro, *op. cit.*, p. 209; and an essay which I have not seen, "Il Goldoni e la Massoneria," in F. Beneducci, *Scampoli critici*, III (Oneglia, 1906).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. A. Graf, *L'Anglomania e l'infusso inglese in Italia nel secolo XVIII* (Torino, 1911), p. 137. A German critic goes so far as to doubt that Goldoni had Freemasonry in mind at all (R. Schmidbauer, *Das Komische bei Goldoni* [München, 1906], p. 126).



I LIBERI MURATORI.  
C O M M E D I A

*D I*

FERLING' ISAC CRENS

FRATELLO OPERAJO DELLA  
LOGGIA DI DANZICA.

D E D I C A T A

*AL CELEBRE ED ILLUSTRÉ SIGNORE*

ALDINORO CLOG

A U T O R E

COMICO PRESTANTISSIMO.

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IN LIBERTAPOLI, P Anno dell'Era Volgare 1754.,  
e della ristaurazione della Loggia 152.

a perfectly harmless association for mutual benefit, the secrecy of which is rather amusing than dangerous. There is no question that Goldoni and Grisellini were friends, and remained so.<sup>1</sup> The younger and less gifted writer very likely discussed with the more famous dramatist the subject of Freemasonry, suggested the subject as suitable for dramatic treatment, and perhaps exhibited the manuscript of his own effort in that line. In any case, there are striking similarities between the two comedies, as a brief analysis will show.

The scene of *I Liberi Muratori* is "Cosmopoli"—not Venice, to which city Erasto proposes (Act V, sc. viii) to take his bride. Act I takes place in the house of Procopio, who has just been elected Gran Capo Maestro of the Masonic lodge. He has two daughters, of whom the younger, Lucilla, is loved by Erasto and Dorante; while the elder, Bellisa, has a comic admirer, il Conte di Poltronico—a personage recalling il Marchese di Forlipopoli in *La Locandiera* and il Conte in *Il Ventaglio*. Marinetta, the maid, tells of her discovery that Procopio, Erasto, and the valet Fabricio are members of the lodge. In answer to the questions of Bellisa, Poltronico claims to be a member, and promises to reveal—but to Bellisa alone—the great secret of Freemasonry.<sup>2</sup> Marinetta therefore allies herself to Lucilla in an effort to discover the mystery; and Lucilla, who really prefers Dorante, decides to favor Erasto. When the latter declares that the mystery is simply the fact that there is no secret, Lucilla refuses to believe him. Dorante asserts that if he knew the secret he would gladly tell it to Lucilla, and Erasto offers to have him initiated at once. In Act II, Poltronico, having falsely stated that he is a Mason, seeks to learn from Fabricio how he may make his word good by becoming one. Fabricio, being only a *fratello servente*, refers him to a certain Dr. Scanagonzi, with whom he gets into a violent dispute. Erasto and Dorante separate them. Sganarello learns

<sup>1</sup> In 1765 Goldoni wrote two letters to Grisellini from Paris, printed by E. Masì, *Lettere di C. Goldoni* (Bologna [1880]), pp. 280, 292. The second, which Grisellini printed in the *Corriere Letterario*, 25 gennaio 1766, contains an interesting discussion of theatrical conditions in France. As to conditions in Italy, "I teatri . . . hanno poco perduto nella mia persona, ma hanno perduto assai, se sono ricaduti nell' antico genio mostruoso."

<sup>2</sup> As an example of Poltronico's language, which is not at all that of the other characters, the following may be quoted (Act I, sc. iv): "Saprete il tutto inanci che Febo giunga all' Occaso per immergersi nel seno della marina Teti. Ma con questo patto, amabile Bellisa, che ad altri non palesarete quanto confiderovvi, e che nel tempo medesimo avrete mercè delle mie sventure, poichè già i riflettuti riflessanti riflessi del vostro bello m' hanno consumato il cervello, ed incendiati i ventricoli del cuore."

that his master Dorante is to join the lodge, and begs to be admitted with him: he has heard that Masons assist one another so effectually that they are never obliged to work or go hungry.

Act III takes place in the lodge. The Soprintendente instructs Procopio in his duties as Gran Capo Maestro: (1) harmony must prevail; (2) the traditional ceremonies must be observed; (3) no new members shall be admitted without paying the entrance-fee; (4) the secret signs of recognition must not be divulged; (5) women are not admitted, and if any woman, moved by curiosity, should penetrate into the lodge, she must be punished even if related to one of the members. Then the members simultaneously go through a series of motions with their hands—*dare il segno*. The candidates for admission, Dorante and Sganarello, are brought in blindfolded; after swearing secrecy, they are declared members. They then watch the others eating and drinking with certain ceremonies. Procopio informs Dorante that there is no secret other than what he has seen; the rest of the members have undergone the same disappointment, but have kept quiet about it in the hope of seeing others made ridiculous in their turn. Sganarello finds that he must now work harder than ever, and be beaten when he is awkward in learning the signs of recognition; his *lazzi* are worthy of his prototype Arlecchino in the *Commedia dell'arte*. In Act IV Dorante admits to Lucilla that there is, as Erasto had told her, no secret; she refuses to believe him, and he goes off, threatening suicide. Sganarello gives the signs to Marinetta, and she, pretending to be a "Muratora," exchanges his lodge-key for another. Poltronico relates to Bellisa, as the great secret, something which he afterward confesses he has just read in a book. Marinetta displays the key, and they all prepare to visit the lodge. In Act V, Lucilla, Bellisa, Marinetta, and Poltronico enter the lodge, and hide. Two of the Masons discuss the history of the society from its formation at the time of the Crusades, and the ridiculous ideas that outsiders have of it: some think that Masons profess a heretical religion, others that they possess the secret of transmuting metals, others again that they propose to overthrow all governments and establish a universal republic. The intruders are discovered; Procopio wishes to punish his daughters, but Erasto offers to take Lucilla to Venice as his bride, and find a



husband there for Bellisa. The location of the lodge must, however, be changed: "Conviene che ci nascondiamo, affinché il nostro Secreto, e l' esistenza de' Liberi Muratori siano sempre due cose problematiche, e incerte."

Griselini thus gives us an avowed description of contemporary Freemasonry, making it more or less ridiculous, and entirely innocuous. The play is fairly well constructed; while the characters are conventional, it is not devoid of interest. In *Le Donne Curiose*, on the other hand, the technical terms of Masonry are not used, and the apologetic purpose is not made evident; yet in this play also we find it demonstrated that a society surrounded by mystery and suspected of sinister purposes is in reality devoted exclusively to innocent social relaxation. In each case women are excluded, and the lively curiosity of the female relatives of the members furnishes the basis of the plot,

Goldoni introduces three of the traditional masked characters, who speak in dialect—Pantalone de' Bisognosi, the Venetian merchant; Brighella, his valet; and Arlecchino. The other personages bear the conventional names that Goldoni frequently uses—Ottavio, a citizen of Bologna, in his homely good sense often compared to Goldoni himself; Beatrice, his wife; Rosaura, their daughter; Florindo, "promesso sposo a Rosaura"; and several friends. We are at once introduced to the club, where the members are reading and playing *dama*; the conversation indicates the informal social purpose of the club, and the exclusion of women. The scene changes to Ottavio's house, and Florindo declares that there is nothing secret about the club, and that Rosaura is mistaken in thinking that women are received there. Beatrice believes that the members gamble, Eleonora that they search for the philosopher's stone. Act II is taken up with the fruitless efforts of the women to learn the secret and to gain admission to the club. As Corallina, the maid, remarks: "Non è curiosità, ma volontà rabbiosissima di sapere." To this Arlecchino rejoins: "Da resto po, no se pol dir, che le sia curiose." Brighella finally takes it upon himself to restore harmony by secretly admitting the four women. In Act III the scene is again the club, with the women in hiding. Pantalone reads to a new member the by-laws of the organization:<sup>1</sup> members must be of

<sup>1</sup> Act III, sc. iv. Translated by Chatfield-Taylor, *Goldoni*, p. 297.

good character; in the clubhouse they must behave with decorum; they must pay their dues, and assist one another in case of need; in order that scandal and jealousy may be excluded, women are not to be admitted; among the members there shall be no other salutation or compliment than the word *Amicizia*. This scene is the only part of the play which seems to apply definitely to the Freemasons; the by-laws are supposed to have been derived from those actually in effect at the time. Finally the women are discovered; Brighella is scolded for admitting them; but, as Goldoni himself says,<sup>1</sup> the men are after all not sorry that the women have been undeceived, so that the innocent diversions of the club may continue.

*I Liberi Muratori* has the more conventional plot, aside from its introduction of Masonic matters, and shows no influence of *Le Donne Curiose*. Thus there is no reason to doubt Grisellini's statement that his comedy was written in 1752, before Goldoni's. On the other hand, the similarities, while not extending to the plot as a whole, or to the characters, are striking. It seems obvious, then, that Goldoni at least knew in a general way about Grisellini's play, whether or not he had actually read it; and that with his instinct for dramatic effect and his readiness to appropriate an idea wherever he found it, he used in his own inimitable manner such portions of it as appealed to him.

The influence of Molière on the Italian dramatists of the eighteenth century, and in particular on Goldoni, has been studied by various scholars;<sup>2</sup> but Grisellini has not hitherto been mentioned in this connection. We should naturally expect a friend and admirer of Goldoni to be at least superficially acquainted with Molière's works; and in fact the names of the characters, and two short passages of dialogue, seem to have been derived from Molière. Lucilla, her lover Erasto, and her maid Marinetta correspond to Lucile, Eraste, and Marinette in *le Dépit amoureux*; Bellisa, the elder sister, has many of the characteristics of Bélise in *les Femmes savantes*—a type also used by Goldoni (for instance, Beatrice in *Il Vero Amico*). Sganarello, an Italian *zanni*, evidently derives his name from the French Sganarelle; this name, in spite of its Italian appearance, has not been traced farther back than Molière, who gives it not

<sup>1</sup> *Memorie*, ed. Mazzoni, I, 382.

<sup>2</sup> See especially P. Toldo, *L'Œuvre de Molière et sa fortune en Italie* (Turin, 1910).

only to a valet (*le Médecin volant*,<sup>1</sup> *Don Juan*), but also to a wood-cutter (*le Médecin malgré lui*) and to a bourgeois (*Sganarelle*, *l'Ecole des maris*, *le Mariage forcé*, *l'Amour médecin*). The name Dorante is common in French drama of the seventeenth century. Molière uses it in *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and also, in connection with Eraste, in *les Fâcheux*. The supposition that Grisellini derived these names from a general acquaintance with Molière's works is confirmed by two passages of dialogue. In Act II, sc. ii, Poltronico rewards Fabricio for some misleading information, and the following dialogue ensues:

*Con.* Avete fatto bene ad avvertirmi. Vi ringrazio il mio caro Fabricio. Intanto per ricompensarvi tenete questi dieci Zecchini.

*Fab.* Obbligatissimo al Sig. Conte. Grazie a vostra Eccellenza.

*Con.* Eccellenza! Eccellenza! Oh bravo! Aspettate. Quest' Eccellenza merita qualche cosa non essendo già parola ordinaria. Questi sono cinque Zecchini che l' Eccellenza vi dona.

*Fab.* Mi confonde colla sua generosità; ed oggi certo voglio fare un brindisi alla salute di vostra Grandezza.

*Con.* Vostra Grandezza? ah, ah, ah. Tenete questi otto Zecchini per la mia Grandezza.

*Fab.* La sua liberalità arriva all' eccesso. Io m' inchino profondamente, e la ringrazio di tutto cuore. (Oh pazzo maledetto! Pazzo, tre volte pazzo, pazzo da catena!) *Via.*

#### SCENA III

#### *Il Conte solo*

Se Fabricio proseguiva a dirmi anche Altezza io gli dava tutta la Borsa.

This recalls the scene at the end of Act II of *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, where Monsieur Jourdain rewards the *garçon tailleur* for calling him successively "mon gentilhomme," "Monseigneur," and "Votre Grandeur," and finally remarks: "S'il va jusqu'à l'Altesse, il aura toute la bourse."

Again, in Act IV, sc. viii, the Conte is alone with Bellisa:

*Bel.* . . . Ma, se vi piace, sediamo. *Siedono.*

*Con.* Son io sicuro, Madamigella, appresso di voi?

*Bel.* Perchè mi chiedete ciò?

*Con.* Ah, temo assai, che gli occhi vostri mi vogliano assassinare.

*Bel.* Assicuratevi sopra la loro integrità, che non han eglino questo reo disegno.

<sup>1</sup> This little play, written by Molière while *en tour*, also contains a Lucile, with whom the master of Sganarelle is in love; but it appears not to have been published until 1819. Cf. *Œuvres de Molière*, ed. Despois, I, 47; and II, 160.

*Con.* Cospetto! Bisognarebbe essere l' antipoda della ragione per non confessare che siete il Collegio di tutte le meraviglie, e che in voi a gara signoreggiano, alma beltà, grande spirito, e leggiadria: Ma cosa dite di questo bel vestito? Non è egli ben fatto? Ah, gran Monsiù di Cutifo! Gran Sarto!

*Bel.* Vi sta dipinto.

*Con.* E di queste calzette di Francia, che ve ne pare? Osservate che bella sacoma hanno i miei scarpini! Questi manichetti poi sono un capo d' opera! A dir il vero, sono poi stato sempre di buon gusto.

*Bel.* Siete la stessa galanteria.

With this passage compare scene x of *les Précieuses ridicules*, where, after Mascarille and the two *précieuses* have seated themselves, the following remarks are made:

*Mas.* Mais, au moins, y a-t-il sûreté ici pour moi?

*Cathos.* Que craignez-vous?

*Mas.* Quelque vol de mon cœur, quelque assassinat de ma franchise. Je vois ici deux yeux qui ont la mine d'être de fort mauvais garçons, de faire insulte aux libertés. . .

*Madelon.* Ne craignez rien: nos yeux n'ont point de mauvais desseins, et votre cœur peut dormir en assurance sur leur prud'homie.

Madelon uses, in speaking of Paris, some of the expressions that the Conte addresses to Bellisa:

Il faudroit être l'antipode de la raison, pour ne pas confesser que Paris est le grand bureau des merveilles, le centre du bon goût, du bel esprit, et de la galanterie.

Later Mascarille draws attention to his costume:

*Mas.* Que vous semble de ma petite-oie? La trouvez-vous congruente à l'habit?

*Cathos.* Tout à fait.

*Mas.* Le ruban est bien choisi.

*Mad.* Furieusement bien. C'est Perdrigeon tout pur.

*Mas.* Que dites-vous de mes canons?

*Mad.* Ils ont tout à fait bon air. . .

These resemblances are superficial and slight, but they are sufficient to indicate that Grisellini should be added to the list of Italian dramatists who were influenced by Molière.

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